

The following has been assembled to mark the occasion of Appleby United Church's 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Much of the information contained in the following is not original. Some of it is derived from *A History of Appleby United Church* by Helen McKercher or *Burlington - Memories of Pioneer Days* by Dorthy Turcotte. Other parts were obtained from communications with descendants of Appleby's pioneer families for which we are grateful and still other information from personal memory.

## **Appleby United Church**

### **Celebrating 200 Years of Service 1824 - 2024**

The history of the men and women who established Appleby Methodist Church in 1824 is one of struggle, endurance and faith. Newcomers to a new land had to overcome many hardships which we today likely can not imagine as they struggled to establish a foothold and a home in a new country. These pioneering people likely did not use the words "Pastor Care" or "Outreach", since out of necessity and devotion, they naturally look out for and help each other. Over the years Appleby people have served one another, served their local and international communities and served God as best they could. On more than one occasion men and women answered the call to serve King & Country with some never returning home. Appleby's history is the history of people, the history of a Community of Faith. Catherine Van Norman blowing on a conch shell to call the faithful to worship in her and Issac's home, dedicated saddle bag preachers bringing the word to rural communities, numerous ordained ministers and lay leaders; these are all part of Appleby's history.

In 1959 this faith community took a leap of faith to build a new place of worship which the congregation occupies today; Appleby's fourth church building. For the members of this mainly farming community at the time, this building must for them have seemed like a palace. Since 1959 Appleby has seen no less than seven of our members become

ministers within the United Church of Canada; one of whom will be Appleby's Anniversary Sunday guest speaker. Appleby's legacy is a proud legacy which we continue to build upon today.

## **The Van Normans**

The Van Norman family first arrived in Nelson Township in 1806. To obtain land grants from the government Ephraim and his son Isaac cleared land and built log homes. It was back breaking labour, but father and son qualified for their Crown deeds in 1809 & 1810 respectively.

The dominant church of the time was the Church of England of which the Van Normans were originally members. It is said that Isaac attended a Wesleyan Methodist prayer meeting so that he could learn enough about the Wesleyans to refute their teachings in conversation, but at one meeting, he "fell to the floor, so happy that he was indeed filled with the spirit of God." From that day on Isaac was an ardent supporter of the Wesleyan Methodist movement and became a well-known lay preacher.

Isaac married Catharine Cummins and in 1814 their one-year-old daughter, Eliza, became ill and died. Since there was no Methodist cemetery, Isaac chose for her burial, a quiet hill near their home. This was the beginning of Mount Vernon Pioneer Cemetery, which remains today on the south service road east of Appleby Line surrounded by light industry.

The rural community of Appleby that grew up around Middle Road (now the QEW) and Appleby line was officially known as Appleby. However, it was also frequently referred to as the Van Norman Neighbourhood. From all accounts Issac Van Norman was a faithful, resourceful and extremely hard-working person. He could and would do a bit of everything including being often called to minister to the sick since the village had no trained physician.

Since there was no Methodist Church, Isaac and Catharine Van Norman opened their home for worship services. Catherine would often call the faithful to worship by blowing on a conch shell. Services were first held

in their log house and later in the summer kitchen of the brick house built in 1824. This marked the founding of Appleby Methodist Church.

### **Pioneer Families**

We have discussed the important roll the Van Norman's had in the establishment of Appleby Methodist Church. There are many other families associated with the pioneering community of Appleby and Appleby Methodist Church. Names such as Atkinson, Alton, Blanchard, Breckon, Segworth, Zimmerman, Fothergill and Richardson to name a few. We don't have the time to delve into the history of all these families however we will highlight a few.

The village of Appleby received its name from Appleby, Westmoreland, in England, the home of several if its pioneer families. The Breckons arrived in 1830, the Fothergills in 1837, Thomas Alton came in 1890 and the Richardsons in the early 1900's. When John and Isabella Blair Breckon came to Canada from Yorkshire, they were responding to the Canadian government's massive advertising campaign which was enticing settlers to this country. Adult British subjects were eligible for 50 acres of free farmland and passage was paid for immigrants with a knowledge of farming.

John and Isabella's 100 acres were on the north side of Middle Road halfway between Appleby Line and Burloak Drive. The Beckons built a log home, planted vegetables and grain and started an orchard.

In 1854 they were able to replace their log house with a two-storey red brick home.

One of John and Isabella's descendants was William or Bill Breckon also know as the "Wheat King" for his prize-winning crops. Bill Breckon, was a lifelong member of Appleby United Church and in the late 1950's was Chair of the Building Committee which oversaw the planning and construction of Appleby's fourth church building. He was also a school board trustee and had the now gone W.E. Breckon Public

School named after him. Appleby's Breckon Wing was dedicated in memory of Bill Breckon.

Christopher and Frances Fothergill were another pioneer couple from Appleby, Westmoreland England, to settle in Appleby, Upper Canada. They arrived in the 1830's. Like most pioneer families, the Fothergills were farmers who worked hard to establish themselves in their new homes but eventually prospered. One of Christopher and Frances' descendants, Chris Fothergill married Eva Griffiths. They were also lifelong members of Appleby United Church and had a farm on the west side of Burloak Drive directly south of the CNR tracks. Chris was Superintendent of the Appleby Sunday School for more than 20 years including a few years in this building. Chris and Eva had a daughter named Shirley who is known today as Shirley Grey.

Joseph and Elizabeth Mary Richardson departed Liverpool England with two small boys and another child on the way in May of 1906, the same year Appleby's third church building was constructed. Arriving in Canada they originally planned to settle in Manitoba where they had family but since Elizabeth Mary was about to give birth and they were running out of funds, they decided to stay in the community of Palermo, a few miles east of the Village of Appleby. In 1909 they purchased a farm on the east side of Appleby Line extending south of the CNR tracks to New Street. The family attended Appleby Methodist Church with all the children attending Appleby Public School. Joseph and Elizabeth Mary would eventually have 8 boys and 3 girls with another boy passing away shortly after birth. In 1944 Joseph purchased a farm on the south side of Middle Road (now the QEW) just west of Appleby Line. This is where David Richardson, who is still a member of the Appleby congregation, lived and grew up while his uncle Norman's family remained on the farm on Appleby Line. If you go just west of Appleby south of Bennet Road you will find Joseph Crt, Louise Crt and Richardson Crt, all named after members of the Richardson family.

Today we owe much to the hardworking, dedicated and faithful men and women who through the years called Appleby home.

### **Do You Remember?**

- Do you remember Pat Sally or our puppet friends Fred & Ethel doing children's stories
- Do you remember Appleby Music Hall with the Nyrobi Trio or Keith Pepper wearing a Tutu
- Do you remember Chris Fothergill as SS Superintendent
- Do you remember when we needed more space to accommodate our Sunday School
- Vietnamese Boat People, Serbian Refugees or the Guatemala missions
- Fund raising programs for Wesley Urban Ministries or Case for Kids
- Do you remember when we had so many people on a Sunday morning, we needed to put chairs up the centre aisle.
- Do you remember when Appleby had a Jr Choir
- Inspiring worship services and wonderful music
- Do you remember Jean Keenleyside and the Appleby Choir recording a CD
- High Teas and Advent Events
- Appleby Canoe Trips
- Church Picnics at Lowville Park
- Pancake Suppers

- Do you remember the Appleby Tennis Court
- Music Ministries Christmas Concerts
- Do you remember Appleby's 150<sup>th</sup> or 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries
- Do you remember the Appleby Golf Tournaments
- Services before we had a PA system and services on YouTube
- Good Friday service with the Presbyterian congregation on New Street
- Do you remember a pig roast supper on the parking lot
- Potluck Suppers in the church hall
- Rummage Sales & Bazaars
- Do you remember our Youth Groups
- Boy Scouts & Girl Guides or the CGIT
- Do you remember Appleby Friends
- Corn roasts at the Segworth's farm
- Do you remember the dreaded yet necessary Board & Committee Meetings
- The construction & first occupants of the Manse
- Construction of the Breckon Wing
- The purchase of a new sanctuary organ; twice!
- Paving of the parking lot
- Reno 50 with the reconstruction of the chancel & Kitchen
- And finally, do you remember Busy Times, Happy Times, Sad Times, Celebratory Times and many Old Friends

